

The President's Radio Address *September 9, 1995*

Good morning. As a candidate for President, I pledged to end welfare as we know it. And as President, I've been doing everything in my power to keep that pledge.

Earlier, for more than 15 years, first as Governor of Arkansas and later when I became President, I have always felt it was critically important to fix our broken welfare system. It doesn't honor our values of work and family and personal responsibility. Well, it's been a long time coming, but finally the Senate is taking up this issue.

Meanwhile, over the last 2½ years, while I've been urging Congress to act, my administration has worked as hard as we can to change the welfare system by executive action in a way that honors the values most Americans hold dear: work, responsibility, and family. We've put tough child support enforcement at the center of the national debate. Our administration collected a record level of child support in 1994—\$10 billion. And I signed a tough Executive order to crack down on Federal employees who owe child support.

We've also cut through Federal redtape to speed up welfare reform all around the country by approving experiments in a record 34 States. Just through these experiments, 7 million recipients of welfare around the country are now being required to work, pay child support, live at home, and stay in school or earn a paycheck from a business that pays them with money that used to be spent on food stamps and welfare. Now, I have told all 50 States they can have these welfare reforms immediately, within 30 days, just by asking.

Next week, it's the Senate's turn to do its part. The current system must be replaced. Instead of requiring people to work, now it penalizes people who go to work. Instead of strengthening families, now it gives teenagers a separate check to leave home, leave school, and set up their own households. Instead of demanding responsibility, it lets too many parents who owe child support just walk away without paying. That's not right, and it's time to change it.

But we should do this the right way, not the wrong way. Real reform, first and foremost, must be about work. We should impose time

limits and tough work requirements while making sure that parents get the child care they need to go to work. We should reward States for putting people to work, not for cutting people off. We will only succeed if we move people from welfare to work.

But real welfare reform is also about family. That means putting in place the toughest possible child support enforcement. It means requiring teen mothers to live at home, to stay in school, to turn their lives around. But it doesn't mean punishing children for the mistakes of their parents.

And finally, welfare reform must be about responsibility. States have a responsibility to maintain their own efforts to move people from welfare to work. That way we can have a race to independence, not a race to the bottom. And individuals have a responsibility to work in return for the help they receive. It's time to make welfare a second chance, not a way of life. It's time to make responsibility a way of life.

Let me be clear: Some differences still remain between the congressional proposals and me. But we must find common ground, and soon. Look how far we've come already. Not long ago, some conservatives were talking about putting young people in orphanages. And not long ago, many liberals opposed requiring welfare recipients to work. But we've reached consensus on these issues. Now we need to go the final mile.

We've stood at the brink of welfare reform before. But for too long, American people have been frustrated by demands for ideological purity, by politicians who put their personal ambitions first. Millions of people who are trapped in the system and millions more taxpayers who pay the tab have suffered as a result. We can't let that happen again.

This is a time to deliver for the American people, not to pander to extremists who have held us back for too long. We can't let welfare reform die at the hands of ideological extremism or Presidential politics or budget politics. If welfare reform gets caught up in the whirlpool of the budget debate, we run the risk that it might drown.

This is an historic moment. For 30 years, under both Democratic and Republican leadership, we've been saddled with a broken welfare system. Now we've got a real chance to reach common ground and higher ground. The Senators owe it to the people who sent them to Washington not to let this opportunity slip away by doing the wrong thing or by failing to act at all. The American people have waited long enough.

Next week, let's end the old system that fosters dependence, and let's give the American people a new one based on independence, work, responsibility, and family.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on the Death of Jamie Whitten

September 9, 1995

It is with deep regret that I learned today of the death of former Congressman and Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee Jamie Whitten. Congressman Whitten served Mississippi and our country in Congress for 53 years, longer than any other person in the history of this Republic. He was literally an institution himself within one of the most important of our democratic institutions.

Throughout his long service and especially as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee from the 96th Congress through the

100th Congress, Congressman Whitten dedicated himself to the concerns of the hard-working people of this country. He worked tirelessly on behalf of America's farmers, especially our family farmers, and he never gave up working to build more opportunity for all Americans willing to make the most of their own lives.

The people of the United States and of Mississippi will miss Jamie Whitten. Hillary and I send our sympathies to his family and loved ones.

Roundtable Discussion With Students on Student Loans at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois

September 11, 1995

The President. Is everybody in? For the members of the press corps that came in with me, as you know, I have been doing these roundtable discussions with students and faculty members and others in colleges around the country. And this is the kickoff of a back-to-school week we're doing this year to emphasize the choices that have to be made in Washington in the next 60 days that will affect education. And so I came here to Southern Illinois University.

One of the big issues is what's going to happen to the student loan program and, particularly, the direct loan program which our administration started. So I thought that we should start by having Pam Britton, who is in charge of financial aid here at SIU, talk a little bit

about how it works—the direct loan program—and what you're doing here.

So, Pam, why don't you lead it off.

[At this point, Ms. Britton welcomed the President and asked the participating students to introduce themselves. Following the introductions, Ms. Britton explained the importance of the student loan program at Southern Illinois University.]

The President. Thank you. Let me explain—how many of you come from schools that have the direct loan program? You know the old guaranteed student loan program basically gave banks a 90 percent guarantee if they made a student loan to a student and the student didn't